

Culture

The USA

Learning objectives

- The students learn about the USA and how it is divided into states. They learn a little more about four of these.
- In the project stage, the students find out about and describe a state or area in the USA or their own country.

Useful vocabulary

armadillo beaver nickname panther poppy
prickly state (region) symbol

Preparation

If the students are going to do the project in class, they will either need access to the internet or books and maps. The website <http://www.discoveramerica.com/usa/states.aspx> has lots of information and pictures about the individual states of the USA.

Warmer

Arrange the students into pairs. Say a word and give them one minute to think of as many associated words as possible. For example, **summer** – *ice cream, holidays, hot*, etc. See which pair has the most words. Other good starter words are **home, money** and **green**. The final one should be **the USA**.

Cultural background

There is a federal system in the USA, so states have some autonomy from the central government and can decide local issues like educational policy and transport regulations. This means that laws can vary between states, so, for example, you can drive when you're 16 in Idaho but you have to be 18 in Florida.

- 1 Ask the students some simple questions to see how much they know about the USA, for example *What's the name of the president? When did Columbus discover America?* (1492), *What is the American English word for 'sweets'?* (candy) Also ask some open questions like *What American films/music do you like?*

The students do the quiz individually, then check with a partner.

Language note: we have the article before 'USA', i.e. 'the USA'.

Fast finishers

Ask the students to add one or two more questions to the quiz for other students to answer. They could use mobile devices to get information. For example:
Which famous river goes through the USA?

A The Amazon **B** The Thames **C** The Mississippi
(Answer: C)

Answers

1 C 2 B 3 A 4 B 5 C 6 A

- 2 Ask the students what the flag of the USA looks like. Ask them how many stars there are on the flag and why (50, one for each state). Explain that the USA is divided into states. Tell the students to read the box, look at the map and find Alaska.

Fast finishers

Ask fast finishers the name of the one other state which, like Alaska, is not joined to the other states. (Hawaii)

Answer

Alaska is shown in orange below the main part of the map. This is because it is situated west of the northern part of Canada.

- 3 See if the students can name the states and then ask them to check with one another in groups of four. (They will find the answers in Exercise 4.)
See which group can name the most other states. You could help by putting up some of the states on the board as anagrams:
gieagro (Georgia)
naidnia (Indiana)
aenvda (Nevada)
rwyekon (two words) (New York)
niwgasonht (Washington)
Underline the first letter of the anagram to give a clue.
- 4 Check that the students know the compass directions by shouting out a position, for example *north, south-east*, and getting them to move to the appropriate part of the classroom.

Give the students two minutes to read the text and check their answers to Exercise 3.

See if the students know what these American holidays are.

July 4th (Independence Day)

Second Monday in October (Columbus Day)

Last Thursday in November (Thanksgiving)

The students could then find out information about them on their mobile devices or in books and discuss which one they would like to take part in.

Answers

1 California 2 Texas 3 Florida 4 New York
Other states will be students' own answers.

- 5** Go through the pictures and get the students to describe them. Teach and drill the new words as you're going through them: *panther, beaver, armadillo, poppy, prickly pear cactus*.

Tell the students to look at the first picture and say what state it belongs to. Then let the students work individually.

Answers

a Florida **b** New York **c** California **d** Texas **e** Texas
f California **g** Florida **h** New York

- 6** Ask the students some comprehension questions about the text, for example *Where is California?* (on the west coast), *Where can you find Disney World?* (Florida) *What plant grows in the desert?* (prickly pear cactus)

The students complete the table.

Mixed ability

With weaker groups, divide the groups into four and each student can fill in the table for one state.

Answers

State	Animal	Plant	Other name
California	bear	poppy	The Golden State
Florida	panther	orange tree	The Sunshine State
New York	beaver	rose	The Empire State
Texas	armadillo	prickly pear cactus	The Lone Star State

Extension activity

Ask the students to discuss which state they would most like to visit and why.

Project

- As preparation, explain again that a state is like a region and ask what the equivalent is in your country. Ask which region the students live in and what is special about it. With stronger students, ask if there is a federal system as in the USA, where regions/states have some freedom. Is this a good or a bad thing?
- Tell the students that they need to make an individual presentation about somewhere in your country or about a state in the USA. In class, get the students to decide which place they will find out about, so that you know there will be variety in the presentations.
- The students find out the information for homework and make a presentation to show in class. Stronger students could add other information, like local languages, special places, regional food/drink, geographical features like lakes, etc.
- The students present their information in class. There could be a vote for the most interesting presentation. Encourage the students to ask one another questions after the presentation. You could also collect all the different information and turn it into a class quiz for another lesson.

Cooler

Read out these places and get the students to write them in two columns: with *the* and without *the*. The answers are given in brackets.

Example:

the –
the USA America

5th Avenue (-)

Hudson River (the)

Empire State Building (the)

Macy's Department Store (-)

Lake Superior (-)

Rocky Mountains (the)

White House (the)

Wall Street (-)

Central Park (-)

Golden Gate Bridge (the)

The students could then find out information about these places from the internet or a library.